Winchester transfer station wins MassRecycle award

JOYCE WESTNER | STAFF WRITER

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DPW Transfer Station Manager Nick Parlee with screened compost. Parlee will accept the 2024 MassRecycle Award for Outstanding Municipality in mid-September. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/JOYCE WESTNER

On a hot and steamy August afternoon, Transfer Station Manager Nick Parlee held a handful of what looked like dirt. But it's not — it's one of the prize possessions that residents are happy to both contribute to

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away. It's yard waste, ground up and turned into a soil amendment cherished by Winchester gardeners.

The soil is one reason Parlee was recently honored with the 2024 MassRecycle Award for Outstanding Municipality.

MassRecyle is a "statewide non-profit coalition dedicated to improving sustainable materials management, recycling, and organics reduction and diversion in Massachusetts and beyond to benefit the climate, economy, communities, and the environment."

An award ceremony will be held Sept. 18 at the DCU Center in Worcester.

Yard waste is one reason the DPW and transfer station has won an award. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/JOYCE WESTNER

Parlee suspects resident Jeff Cabral nominated the town (Cabral confirmed that he did), and was quite surprised Winchester won.

"We were being compared to a lot of swanky towns that have curbside pickup," he says.

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Parlee has been making a big push with commercial trash collectors who now can dump a truckload of recyclables for a fee.

“It just covers the cost to remove it,” he says. “It’s a way to provide the contractors with a service.”

The station hauls away about five tons of materials each week, but the yard waste stays in town.

“Once a month or so we rent a trommel screen to break down the material into usable soil or compost,” he says.

The town pays $15,000 for the equipment, but it can only be used if the weather stays dry. Which is why Parlee is excited the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has awarded the town $100,000 to buy one.

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“We put it out to bid,” he says, “and we’ll be going to Town Meeting for an additional $75K.”

He’s also hoping to get a $250,000 grant from the DEP to buy an aerobic digester.

“It’s like a big metal stomach,” he says. “We can feed in food waste and process it on site and mix it with the yard waste. I saw one at a trade show. It takes the ick out of food waste by macerating it and turning it into a powder.”

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Parlee studied urban planning at the University of New Hampshire, but didn't follow up.

“I fell into the trap of loving to see progress” he says. “And urban planners have to wait a long time to get anything done.”

Fritzie Nace, who used to be on a now defunct Recycling Advisory Committee, praises Parlee for his work.

“Nick is doing a fabulous job with all of the renovations and upgrades,” Nace says. “He really knows how to take advantage of state grant opportunities and uses the Recycling Dividends Program to get additional money to enhance the waste management program.”

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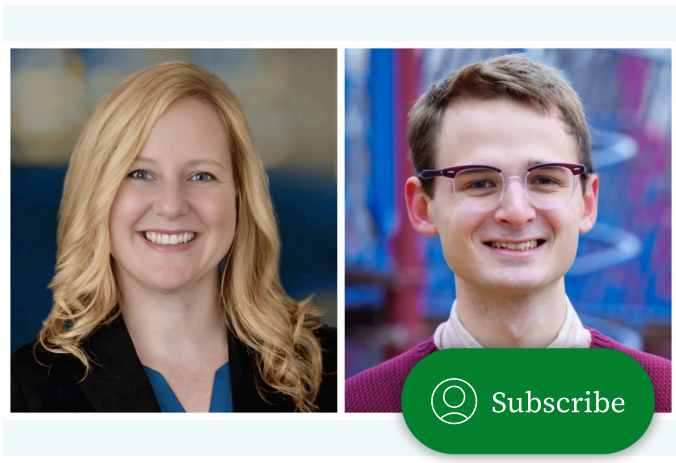

NEWS

Celebrate Women's History Month with Girls Leading Change

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: To mark Women's History Month and International Women's Day in 2026, the Network for Social Justice is collaborating with club leaders from Winchester High School and members of the Community Health team from La Colaborativa in Chelsea and

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Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

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FEATURES

'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

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Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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